

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE LAKE ERIE & WESTERN RAILROAD NEAR EAST LYNN, ILL., ON OCTOBER 15, 1922.

December 22, 1922.

To the Commission:

On October 15, 1922, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Lake Erie & Western Railroad near East Lynn, Ill., resulting in the death of 1 employee, and 1 trespasser, and the injury of 2 employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on that part of the Peoria Division extending between Tipton, Ind., and Rankin Yard, Ill., a distance of 104.3 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles west of East Lynn; approaching this point from either direction the track is tangent for several miles, while the grade is practically level. The station and train order signal at East Lynn are located on the north side of the track, the latter being approximately 26 feet in height, and about 14 feet from the track, directly in front of the operator's window. It is a two-arm, two-position signal, of the lower quadrant semaphore type. Owing to trees near the right-of-way the view of the train-order signal from the engineman's side of a westbound train is limited to about 800 feet. The passing siding at East Lynn is on the south side of the main track and extends from a point 1000 feet west of the station to a point 700 feet east thereof. There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 9.15 a.m.

Description.

Eastbound freight train extra 5388 consisted of engine 5388 and a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Gregg and Engineman Ferri. At Rankin Yard, the initial terminal 4.2 miles west of East Lynn, the crew received a copy of Form 31, train order No. 31, reading as follows:

"Eng 5388 run extra Rankin yard to Tipton Yard Take Siding meet Extra 5389 West at East Lynn"

Extra 5388 departed from Rankin Yard at 9.05 a.m., and

after having proceeded about 3 miles, while traveling at a speed estimated at 25 miles an hour, collided with extra 5339.

Westbound freight train extra 5389 consisted of 10 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 5389, and was in charge of Conductor Hughes and Engineman Rediger. This train left Hoopeston, 6.8 miles east of East Lynn, at 8 55 a.m., passed East Lynn, the last open office, at 9.10 a.m., and while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 15 and 25 miles an hour collided with extra 5388.

The force of the impact drove engine 5388 backwards a distance of about 85 feet, derailing the front driving wheels, while engine 5389 was derailed to the left and came to rest on its left side, parallel to the track, the forward ends of both engines being considerably damaged. The first car in extra 5389 was demolished and the second car considerably damaged. The employee killed was the fireman of extra 5388.

Summary of evidence.

Agent - Operator Denman, stationed at East Lynn, comes on duty on Sundays to meet train No. 5. As soon as westbound train No. 5 passed East Lynn, on the day of the accident, which was Sunday, the westbound train-order signal was placed in the stop position, in which position it remained until this train reached Rankin Yard, where it is scheduled to arrive at 8.17 a.m. Agent - Operator Denman then cleared the train-order signals in order to enable him to remove and clean the lamp more easily. Shortly afterwards the train dispatcher telephoned him, for the purpose of copying Form 31 train order No. 31, previously quoted, for delivery to extra 5389, and Agent Denman stated he immediately displayed a stop indication on the westbound train-order signal, then copied the order and repeated it to the dispatcher, after which the dispatcher informed him that extra 5389 left Hoopeston at 8.55 a.m. About 9.08 a.m., thinking it was time for this train to arrive, Agent Denman went outside to watch for it and after a short time saw it approaching through the dense fog; he also saw that the westbound train-order signal was properly displayed, and went back into the office to prepare the train order for delivery to the crew. However, as the train was traveling at a high rate of speed when just east of the station, and thinking that the indication of the train-order signal might not be seen in time to bring the train to a stop, Agent Denman went to the window and endeavored to attract the attention of Engineman Rediger by signaling that he had a train order for him. Shortly afterwards he ran outside and just as he got to the door the caboose went by; He then endeavored to attract the at-

tention of Flagman Woolley, who was on the rear platform, but he did not succeed in doing so. Agent Denman stated that on account of the fog, vision was limited to about 1,300 or 1,500 feet, he emphatically stated he not only had heard the noise the train-order signal made when it moved to the stop position, but also saw this signal was properly displayed for extra 5389 at the time he went outside to watch for its approach. Agent-Operator Mercer, employed at another station, was in the office at East Lynn and stated that after he saw Agent-Operator Denman place the train-order signal in the stop position, and also heard train order No. 31 repeated to the dispatcher, he went to his home, which is near the station. Later he heard extra 5389 approaching, and noticed that it did not stop at the station; knowing the contents of train order No. 31, he immediately started running toward the station and when about 40 feet from his home could plainly see the westbound train-order signal displaying a stop indication, at which time extra 5389 was about one-fourth mile west of the station. He did not remember the position of the eastbound signal. Deputy Sheriff Harwood who was at the station stated the westbound train-order signal was displaying a stop indication when the engine of extra 5389 was just east of the station; he also stated the arm on the south side was down, in which position a clear indication is displayed for eastbound trains. Deputy Coroner Van Etta was in conversation with Agent Denman just before extra 5389 arrived. He saw this train approaching, and as the engine passed the station Engineman Rediger waved to him; as soon as the caboose went by, Deputy Sheriff Harwood called his attention to the stop indication displayed by the train-order signal.

Engineman Rediger stated that both arms of the train-order signal were displaying clear indications at the time extra 5389 passed, at which time the speed was between 25 and 28 miles an hour; he called the indication of the westbound signal to Fireman Evans and Head Brakeman De Camp, but received no response. When he first saw extra 5388 through the fog he thought it was the rear end of a train, as the headlight on that engine was not burning; he shut off steam and made a heavy air brake application, however, on realizing it was an engine approaching, he moved the brake valve to the emergency position, and jumped just before the accident occurred. Engineman Rediger estimated the speed of his train at the time of the accident to have been about 15 or 18 miles an hour. The fireman, head-brakeman and conductor did not see the train-order signal. Flagman Woolley went out on the rear platform of the caboose when it was just east of the station and he stated that at that time the westbound train-order signal was displaying a clear indication, and he was of the impression the eastbound arm was displaying a stop indication. He stayed on the rear platform for a considerable distance west of the

station, and on going inside informed Conductor Hughes the westbound signal was clear.

Dispatcher Harty stated the first knowledge he had that an extra east was to be run out of Rankin Yard was when it reported for orders at 8.55 a.m.; he immediately called Hoopeston and was told that extra 5389 was working in the west end of the yard and that an order could not be delivered to them; not knowing how long extra 5389 was likely to be delayed at Hoopeston, he called East Lynn and told the operator to copy a form 31 order for an extra west, the order was transmitted and repeated at 8.59 a.m., at which time the operator at East Lynn told him that the stop signal was displayed for west-bound trains, later he again called the operator at East Lynn and called his attention that train-order No. 31 was addressed to extra 5389 west. In issuing train-order No. 31 he omitted to state in the order that it was being issued to extra 5389 at the meeting point for the reason that the switch where the eastbound train was required to take the siding was located about 65 car lengths west of the point where extra 5389 was to receive the order, he did not take any extra precaution as required by rule except to call the operator's attention to the fact that the order was addressed to extra 5389 west, had he known the weather was foggy, he would not have issued the order.

Dispatcher Harty said that the rule relative to issuing restrictive orders at meeting points is usually obeyed, but at East Lynn the track is straight, the train order signal can be seen a long distance and as far as he knew the weather was clear. It has been the practice for operators to advise him of foggy weather. He stated that had he held extra 5388 at Rankin Yard for extra 5389 west it would probably have delayed that train 30 minutes.

Conclusions.

While the statements of witnesses in this case are somewhat conflicting, the weight of evidence indicates that the train order signal was in the stop position when it was passed by extra 5389 and warrants the conclusion that the accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Rediger properly to observe and obey the indication of the train-order signal at East Lynn.

It is probable that the fog prevailing in the vicinity of East Lynn at the time of the accident and the fact that he was nearing the end of his run and not likely to receive a train order, led Engineman Rediger to be less observant than he should have been and resulted in his failing to observe this signal. It was the engineman's duty

to observe this signal and for his failure to do so there can be no excuse.

The primary cause of the accident was the failure of an engineman to observe a train order signal; however, the underlying cause was the issuing of a train order restricting the rights of a train at a point where the order was received, in violation of the rules.

Operating rule S-208 is in part as follows:

"A train order must not be sent to a superior train at the meeting point if it can be avoided. When an order is so sent, the fact will be stated in the order and special precautions must be taken to insure safety."

The purpose of this rule is to provide a margin of safety in arranging train movements by train order and it is designed to provide protection in just such a situation as this. The only exceptions which the rule permits are instances where it cannot be avoided, and in such instances the rule requires that special precautions must be taken to insure delivery of and obedience to the order.

Dispatcher Harty disregarded all the requirements of this rule. In the first place he issued the order to the superior train at the meeting point when the only reason that it could not have been avoided was that it would mean a possible delay of 30 minutes to an engine hauling a caboose, a further excuse being that the switch where the inferior train was to take the siding was 65 car lengths west of the point where the superior train received the order.

Dispatcher Harty also failed to state in the order that it was issued to the superior train at the meeting point, neither did he require the operator to take any additional precautions to insure the stopping of the train.

Had he complied with the rule in this instance in not issuing the order at the meeting point, this accident could not have happened, or had he required the operator at East Lynn to take special precaution such as placing torpedoes upon the rail, it is probable that Engineman Rediger's attention would have been called to the position of the train order signal and the accident would not have occurred. Dispatcher Harty said had he known that it was foggy at East Lynn he would not have issued the order.

Rule 1361, relating to operators provides:

"They must report the weather as required and in case of any sudden change, heavy storm, or fog make an immediate report by wire to the train dispatcher."

Operator Denman at East Lynn did not report the fog to the train dispatcher, stating that it was foggy when he first came on duty and he assumed that the dispatcher was aware of the condition.

While there is no rule requiring it, had operator Denman had a proper interest in his work and regard for safety he would have taken some precautionary steps to insure the stopping of the train. He knew the order was issued at the meeting point and of the existence of the fog and was fully aware of the probable result of the non-delivery of the train order.

At the time of the accident the crew of extra 5389 had been on duty 9 hours and 5 minutes, previous to which they had been off duty 8 hours and 20 minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.